Interview FAQs:

Where can staff develop their selection committee skills?

- Review your career development objectives.
- Book yourself in to a staff selection programme
- Sign up as a volunteer with the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry Admissions Office to participate in structured interviewing techniques. This provides a solid foundation in using structured interviewing techniques.
- Volunteer as an independent member of a selection committee in other work areas with more experienced staff.

Do applicants need to submit a written statement addressing each selection criterion?

No, it is entirely optional in how applicants can apply. They are advised on the web on how to apply. Internal applicants may prefer to apply this well-known approach as they may feel more comfortable with this practice.

Can the selection committee request applicants to submit a written statement addressing each selection criterion?

No. Applicants choose their method of applying.

Is it optional for the committee to accept applications that formally include a written statement that specifically addresses each selection criterion?

No, the committee is required to accept these applications. The committee should give no additional weight to those applications that include such a statement.

What assistance is available to applicants in preparing an application?

Refer to the information in Appendix 2, What applicants need to include in their application.

What assistance is available to the selection committee in interpreting applications?

- Refer to information in Appendix 2 from the perspective of both the applicant in preparing an application and the selection committee interpreting an application.
- Review the examples provided.
- Take the opportunity to attend a selection skills workshop.
- If time poor, see the relevant video-recording on the web

Can the selection committee accept late applications?

Yes, these can be accepted by the committee up until the interview stage at the discretion of the work area.
- Work areas with hard-to-fill positions may also wish to advertise that late applications may be considered after the closing date.

Does the committee proceed to interview a single applicant?

If the applicant meets the selection criteria, then yes. If the committee wishes to widen the field of applicants then consider revising the recruitment and advertising strategy and broaden the search for a wider pool of applicants. There is the potential for the applicant to lose interest and withdraw from the process or accept another role elsewhere. Consider offering the applicant a fixed term contract rather than an ongoing appointment.

1 Are those positions that conventional advertising yields a low pool of applicants
Can the selection committee conduct a “coffee” chat as part of the interview process?

- Yes, when the coffee chat covers the selection criteria it becomes the formal interview or part of the process. For example, you may want to assess interpersonal skills. You would need to indicate to the applicants the coffee chat is the first round of interviews and a second round is required.
- If the coffee chat is more of a social get together then it would not meet the requirements of the selection policy. You will need to inform applicants they are required to participate in a formal interview process.

How long should the interview be?

- Allow approximately 30-45 minutes for early career positions and up to 45-60 minutes for senior roles. Any longer and it becomes an endurance test. Consider scheduling a second round interview for senior roles to hone in on particular areas. The pace and questions need to flow smoothly.
- If the applicant clearly does not meet the key selection criteria, there is no need to continue with every interview question. Maintain the applicant's dignity and respectfully ask the applicant if there is anything else that they wish to add to support their application? Thank the applicant and close the interview.

What is the ideal number of questions to ask?

Review the desired behaviours you expect from each critical selection criterion. Start with the time allocated for the interview, say 45 minutes. Allow a warm-up question to relax applicants and the selection committee. Allow approximately 5-7 minutes per question with say a total of 6 questions. Remember you have the opportunity to ask probing questions. That gives 35-42 minutes of interviewing time per applicant. The remainder of time can be used for reviewing and assessing applications.

What is the order of questions?

- Start with a warm-up question.
- It is more effective to ask questions related to the critical selection criteria for the first round of interviews. If you need a second round of interviews you can then go to the desirable selection criteria to form interview questions.
- However, if you have strong applicants and they have performed well and the committee has time available then ask questions that tap into the next level of selection criteria. These would be questions that relate to the desirable selection criteria.

Can the committee repeat the interview question?

- Yes. Check if the applicant has understood the question. Try rephrasing the question. If other applicants are also having difficulty responding it may be a poorly worded question.
- If you only repeat the same question you will get the same information.

Can the committee ask different questions of the applicants?

Yes, absolutely. The committee asks all applicants the same core interview questions. It is the committee's responsibility to obtain sufficient evidence from the applicant about their capacity to demonstrate that they meet the selection criteria. Each applicant will have unique experiences or experiences that might be directly based on the position but they may be able to demonstrate how other indirect experiences can support this role. Refer to their résumé and draw upon those
experiences and use **probing questions** to obtain the detail you need to make an informed decision.

For example, “I note that you were involved in setting up a conference. Tell us what your involvement was?” The applicant may not elaborate on their planning and organising experience so you will need to ask probing questions one at a time and without interrogation to draw out the detail. “Who else worked with you? How many people attended the conference? Who were the intended audience and what attendance were you expecting? How did you achieve this? What or who did you need to organise? What steps or equipment did you use to stay on track/within budget? When did you start with these steps? Were there any challenges along the way? What did you do? What did the conference mean to you…your workplace? In hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently? Why/why not? What did you learn?”

**Does the committee need to ask every question?**

- Not if the applicant has already answered the question previously. Tell the applicant that they responded earlier to the question about x…ask “is there anything else you would like to add?”
- Discuss how the committee will manage the interview process with applicants when the applicant has not met the critical selection criteria in the interview and other evidence indicates they do not meet the required standard. The committee can finish the interview as planned and ask if the applicant has anything else they would like to add to support their application and thank them.

**What types of questions give the best responses from applicants?**

- Straight-forward open ended questions that encourage applicants to provide examples and give evidence of their achievements and how their experience relates to the position that they are applying for.
- Questions that flow and lead into another subject matter with ease.
- Refer to interview question examples.

**What type of questions produce poor responses from applicants?**

- Double or triple-barrelled questions will confuse applicants and the committee.
- Closed questions will encourage a yes or no response.
- Hypothetical questions such as “what is your impression of a good leader” will perhaps encourage a long-winded theoretical response devoid of behaviour-based evidence.
- Questions that require the applicant to provide a response to a hypothetical situation will not necessarily surface the applicant’s response in a real situation, and may only give you their version of a ‘best practice’ response.
- Questions that leap from one subject to another will confuse applicants and the committee.

**Can applicants give negative information?**

Yes. Allow the opportunity for positive and negative information to be presented. In the case of negative information ask probing questions about why this happened. Consider followup questions of what was learnt from the experience and what could have been done differently.

**What happens when the selection committee asks an applicant about a time when things didn’t go to plan and their responses are poor or even indicate this has never happened to them?**
Explain that we have all experienced times when things didn’t go to plan. This question is asked to find out how you learn from challenges and what you do. It is not a trick question.

**What happens if a selection committee member has asked the applicant a question but other members still have concerns?**

The selection committee needs to establish prior to commencing interviews which questions will be asked and by whom. Obtain the agreement of the selection committee members that when a member has finished asking their questions of an applicant that other selection committee members have the opportunity to ask further questions to probe or clarify.

**Can the selection committee conduct an interview outdoors?**

- Yes. Consider the setting appropriate for the role.
- For an outdoor-based position, you may wish to meet the applicants at a pre-arranged meeting point then walk them across the campus and show them where they would be working. You could also base interview questions around a particular aspect of the role. For example, with a maintenance role you could show them the priority work that needs completion. Ask a relevant interview question based on this work and in the context of completing this work with the surroundings i.e. students, staff, heritage grounds, parking and campus access. What would you need to consider? What steps would you take?
- For an indoor position, you may wish to create a warm welcome in a relaxed setting. Consider meeting applicants at a point then walking them across part of the campus or to their future work area and colleagues. You want to understand how they will “fit” with the team, group and University. Consider asking questions about why they are interested in working here, what they are searching for in their working life or assess their interpersonal skills as you stroll and greet other colleagues.

**What if a member of the selection panel is a referee for an applicant being interviewed?**

It is advisable for panel member to provide a reference in writing prior to the interview to avoid perceptions of bias, or of the likelihood that witnessing the applicant’s performance at interview may change the tenor of the reference provided.

**Can the selection committee ask a scenario-based question?**

Yes, if relevant to the selection criteria. Scenario-based questions are an alternative or supplementary approach and can be used in the following situations:

- when applicants may not have the direct experience to meet the selection criteria
- when the workplace has a specific requirement that would assess whether the applicant can meet this need
- the scenario question serves to supplement behaviourally-based interview questions

**What are the challenges in using a scenario-based interview question?**

- Applicants may provide an intellectualised long-winded response if the question is too broad and non-specific
  - Counter this response by reviewing the background details to provide sufficient context for applicants and give the scenario question to them 15 minutes prior to conducting the interview so they can collect their thoughts. Then ask “what would you do if...how would you approach this situation?” Supplement the question with “has this happened to you?” and draw out experiences.
• Applicants may be given negative scenarios which may not typify the workplace or conversely may appear to be too realistic and as such may cause the applicant to lose interest in proceeding with the selection process
  o Counter this with using a balanced scenario which is neither too rosy nor too negative but typifies the workplace.

**What happens if a member of the selection committee brings in negative gossip or hearsay about an applicant?**

This is irrelevant and not evidence-based. It is inadmissible. It is likely to create a “horns” effect and the selection committee will search to confirm their initial negative impression of the applicant. The applicant will be treated differently than other applicants and therefore negatively bias decision making. Stick to the evidence.

**How does the selection committee get the best from internal applicants?**

Tell the applicant that they need to present their application as though they don’t know the selection committee. The selection committee is interested in the evidence the applicant presents on the day of the interview even though you may have previously worked in the area or role. Confirm this approach with the selection committee.

**How does the selection committee close the interview?**

Tell the applicant that “All the formal questions are now completed. The selection committee will now give you a few minutes to think of any questions you may like to ask while we review our notes. You may also wish to add any further information to support your application.” Tell the applicant the next steps and timeframe.

**What should the selection committee do if we can’t make a decision by consensus?**

• Go over the evidence presented. Impressions are not evidence and are inadmissible. Confirm any new findings.
• If concerns are still present then consider a second round interview or work tests that focus on the areas of concern.
• If differences still exist then provide a minority report.

**Is there an appeals process for applicants?**

• There is no appeal process. By applying the recommended processes, including giving feedback to unsuccessful applicants, the selection committee can substantially reduce negative applicant experiences. Any grievances will need to be managed by the selection chair.
• Internal applicants who are not satisfied with the feedback from the selection committee chair and still feel aggrieved with the process may raise their concerns with their Employee Relations Officer.
• Further assistance can be directed to the HR Adviser, Recruitment 【6488 4273.】